

TRANSCRIPT

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

Release No. 0412.05

Contact: USDA Press Office (202) 720-4623

**of
Utah Farm Bill Forum With Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and Moderator Kevin
Kitchen, KSVC-KCYQ at the Utah State Fair in Salt Lake City, Utah on September 14,
2005**

MODERATOR: Just a special thank you to members of 4-H and of course the FFA as well as the Clearfield High School Jr. ROTC for bringing us the colors, and the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem. That was a stirring rendition. All right.

The Farm Bill 2007 is coming up. I want to briefly give you a quick introduction. Of course sitting near to me, the Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, and originating from the state of Iowa. Is that correct? And he has been making the circuit around the nation.

And it's a fantastic opportunity at a grassroots level now for you to get your questions to him. The Secretary will have a few brief remarks, and then we're going to turn this program over to you. And I'll go over the rules and the guidelines for that in just one moment.

Before we start I'd just like to take notice-- we do have our Secretary of Agriculture for the state of Utah, Leonard Blackham in the audience with us. Leonard, can we have you stand? Appreciate him being here.

[Applause.]

It's my understanding that the governor may be dropping by for a visit later on in the program. So we'd like to recognize that.

Secretary, would you like to make a few remarks?

SEC. MIKE JOHANNNS: I would love to. Well, let me start out and say it's great to be in Utah. It's actually great to be back in Utah. I was here a few months ago, and so it is good to be back. I want to say thank you for that very, very nice, warm welcome. I must admit as you stood it reminded me of a story I often share. I had just been elected the governor of Nebraska a few years back, but I hadn't been sworn in yet. And I was invited to go to a community kind of in the central part of the state, Kearney, Nebraska, to give a speech. And so my wife Stephanie and I drive out there, and I'm introduced, and as I'm making my way to the podium to give this speech everybody stood up and applauded. And so I got to the podium and I said, "You know, ladies and gentlemen, that's really very nice of you, but I haven't done anything yet." And somebody in back yelled out, "And when you do we won't be standing!" So.

[Laughter.]

So it's nice to get that warm welcome. I do appreciate it.

I do want to recognize Kevin Kitchen. Kevin is from KSVC-KCYQ. Did I get that right?

MODERATOR: You got that correct. Thank you.

SEC. JOHANNIS: And he is going to be our moderator today. He'll be the enforcer of the time limit. He'll explain that in a few minutes.

I do also want to acknowledge, I think the governor is going to stop by a little later on in our program here today. I got to know your governor. They have, through the National Governors Association, a program for newly elected governors, and so my wife and I went to that. We were actually instructors because we had been governor and first lady for about six years, so we offered advice. So ladies and gentlemen, if you do something or if John does something that you don't like, you can blame it on me. All right?

I do also want to say thank you to Clearfield High School ROTC. They did a great job. Josh-- is it Dallin? It is Dallin-- was our 4-H talent vocal competition winner. He did the National Anthem. Didn't he do a great job? I thought it was really good.

[Applause.]

And then Emily and Erin led us in the Pledge of Allegiance and to the USDA State Farm Bill Forum Committee and the Utah State Fair organizers, thank you for your work to the state fair. Thank you so very much for your hospitality. Gosh. Your work has paid off. Standing room only crowd. And incidentally, to those people who are looking for a seat there are some seats over here, plenty of them as a matter of fact. So come on up and take a seat. You don't want to leave that space blank. I feel like the preacher on Sunday morning. So those seats are there for you.

I wanted to just visit with you about a few things, and then we'll get the forum under way. First thing I wanted to mention, as you know the USDA has been very, very involved in the efforts relative to the hurricane in the Gulf, Hurricane Katrina. We've put money down there to help with emergency assistance and clean-up. One of the things that the USDA really has at its disposal is food. And so we have already shipped about 15 million pounds of food into that area to feed people who are displaced by the hurricane. We've identified housing units across the country. We have about 4,000 Forest Service employees down there, some from your state in this part of the country.

And I also understand that Utah actually became an evacuation point for about 630 citizens that were evacuated out of this area. And I just got a briefing on how well you are doing here. I just want you to know how much we appreciate that. I just think it speaks volumes about your caring attitude. And so we appreciate it. It's a tough situation down there, and we'll be working on this for months to come. But I thought this would be a good opportunity to give you an update.

Farm Bill Forums? This is our, I think this is our 17th or 18th. I've done forums all across the country. They've been great. This one I'm sure is going to be equally as good.

When I talked to the President about becoming Secretary of Agriculture, he said, Mike, I really want you to get out with farmers and ranchers across the United States. And we really worked to do that. In fact I think I've been in 24 states since I took this job in January, and I've

loved every minute of that. It is so helpful just to hear from people what's on their mind, what they like about the Farm Bill, what they'd like to see different.

But it really was because of the efforts of the President to reach out to farmers and ranchers that I am here. And so I brought greetings from the President, and I think if the timing is right let's play the President's greeting.

[Playing of videotape.]

PRES. GEORGE W. BUSH: Thanks for letting me speak to you at this Farm Bill Forum. America's farm and ranch families provide a safe and abundant food supply for our people and for much of the world. You represent the best values of America -- stewardship of the land, hard work and independence, faith, service and community.

Mike Johanns understands the importance of America's farmers to our country, which is why I chose him to lead our Department of Agriculture. I'm proud of his work, and he will lead our efforts on the next Farm Bill. Secretary Johanns and I believe the first step in this process is to ask each of you how today's Farm Bill is working and how it can be better.

As we look to improve America's farm policy, we will continue to focus on the following goals.

See, America has about 5 percent of the world's population which means 95 percent of your potential customers are overseas. So one of our goals must be to ensure that America's farmers and ranchers have access to open, global markets.

A second goal is that we want future generations to have plenty of opportunities to go into agriculture.

Thirdly, we need cooperative conservation that encourages good stewardship of our land and natural habitats.

We also need to act wisely in delivering help to our producers. And we must promote cutting-edge agricultural products and research.

Finally, we must ensure good quality of life in rural America. The Farm Bill is important legislation that meets real needs. The next Farm Bill should further strengthen the farm economy and preserve this way of life for farmers and ranchers of the future.

Hearing your advice is an important step toward meeting these goals. I thank you for all you do for our country, and thank you for listening.

[End of videotape.]

SEC. JOHANNIS: There's your President. You bet. That's great.

[Applause.]

Many years ago I grew up on a farm in North Central Iowa, grew up on a dairy farm. Now I see puzzled expressions. You're all sitting out there wondering, well where at in Iowa? So I better clear that up so you're not thinking about that while we need to be thinking about this Farm Bill. I grew up near Osage, Iowa. Now you're still confused. I can see you smiling, and you're wondering where is Osage, Iowa? So I'll clear that up. Osage is south of Stacyville and

St. Ansgar, and it's straight east of Manly. So now you know where Osage is at.

[Laughter.]

I tell people, my father John had three sons, and his idea of building character in his sons, and it was a good idea, was to hand us a pitchfork and send us out to the barn or the hog house or -- and you know stand ankle-deep in you know what and pitch away. Little did he know he was preparing me for my life in politics, right?

[Laughter.]

Well, let me just wrap up here with a couple of thoughts about what we hope to accomplish today. Pretty quickly here I'm going to sit back on this chair here, and I'm going to hear from you. This is your opportunity. Quite honestly mostly what I'm going to do over the next two and a half, three hours is, I'm going to listen and I'm going to take notes. Be very unusual that I even would offer much of a comment because I realized early on that if I was the one doing the talking it wasn't going to be much of a forum. And the whole idea here is to give you as much time to offer your thoughts.

We also record this, so we can put it up on our website, we can analyze the information that we've secured through these Farm Bill Forums, and we take notes. Somebody asked me just over the lunch hour what I thought the impact of these would be. And I said, You know, already at the USDA we've spent time going through the information I've compiled, talking about some of the ideas that people have put out at these forums. So they are helpful.

We focus on six things, but you know we want to hear from you. What I would ask is, if you've got a specific USDA problem -- maybe you've got an application for a loan pending, aren't hearing from us, we want to know about that but it probably would be best if you could get a USDA person and let's try to get you an answer to that question. We're kind of interested in the big picture relative to farm policy.

We'd like you to address the challenges for new farmers, the question of how do we stay competitive in a world marketplace. Is the distribution of our farm program benefits the best way of doing it? Is it a fair distribution? I might add, that has gotten a tremendous amount of discussion across the country. The fourth area is an area you're familiar with because you do a lot of it here, and that's conservation. The fifth area is rural economic development -- what do you think about our rural economic development programs? Are they getting the job done? And then the final area is expansion of ag products and research.

So ladies and gentlemen, it is good to be here in Utah. It's good to be here at the forum. This is your time. I'm going to set the microphone down, and I'm anxious to hear from you. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MODERATOR: Thank you, Secretary. All right briefly, I might mention a lot of these people you see here have character, and I'm sure they've been through that procedure. There's a song a lot of our farmers in Utah will be familiar with. You speak about that hog pen and building character-- there's one song we sing called Scatter Sunshine. And that's the song that my father used to help build character in me when he stuck me in the hog pen. So Scatter Sunshine everywhere you go.

This is going to be your opportunity to do that. Of course this is a grassroots

participation level opportunity for you. It's not often that you have an opportunity to have someone from the President's Cabinet here where you can give them that one-on-one.

Now we're going to ask you to be very concise. He mentioned the fact that we're going to be taping this program, and so your comments will be part of a public record. You need to be aware of that. Also be aware of the fact that we're going to hold you to two minutes. I've had a talk with the sound man here. He tells me he's fully capable of cutting the microphone to two minutes if we need to do that. We've got some timing help here as well, and I've given her a few cues to give me like -- things like that.

What we will do is, if we get down to the last 30 seconds and you're still talking I will give you a signal to wrap it up, okay? So we can get on and get as many comments as possible for the Secretary to listen to. This is his opportunity to listen to you.

Now there are six questions. Let me just mention before I mention those questions in specific that we do have representatives from the USDA. You've seen the logo; it's on the Secretary's shirt. They're stationed throughout the audience. If you have specific needs, talk to them. You can always go to the webpage, USDA.GOV. And there's a way you can submit your comments if you're not the type who wants to speak in front of a microphone. And you can do that via e-mail and you can go through that whole routine as well.

So with all of that said, let's quickly brush over the questions. The Secretary mentioned them in brief. I'll read them in full for you. And when you step up to the microphone, we'll have you if you could tell us which question you're addressing. That will help for the public record.

The six questions are these. How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers in the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?

Question number two is about competitiveness. How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to compete effectively in the global markets? And a sidebar to that, the challenge facing new producers.

Is current farm policy designed to effectively and fairly distribute assistance to producers?

How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals, and how can federal, rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?

Question number six, how should these agricultural product marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next Farm Bill?

The next Farm Bill is in the year 2007, and of course our current Farm Bill will expire just prior to that.

All right. With that said, we would like to introduce our first two questions, and these are going to be presented by a member of the FFA, Erin Peterson of Nephi. She's the state FFA Association President. Erin, if you could step up and give us your question. And what we will do is, we will alternate between microphones. The microphone to my east is on my right, microphone to my west, so I'll say east or west microphone, and we'll just go that direction.

Erin, if you'd step up?

MS. ERIN PETERSON: I am responding to question number one about farm policy. We as members of the FFA truly do believe in the future of production agriculture, but we also believe that these unintended consequences that are influencing youth cannot be combated with farm policy or monetary incentives alone. We must secure ourselves a rising generation of production farmers. We must first put the word "production agriculture" back into our school counselors' vocabularies.

We must show the youth of today the potential that is available in this industry. We need to provide opportunity. Our government is funding students in inner cities and providing them with the opportunity to become doctors, lawyers and engineers. We need to provide the same opportunity for the kid aspiring to be a farmer. In wake of a natural disaster, Americans are asking, can we provide for ourselves?

We live in a generation where biotechnology and genetic modifications are revolutionizing the face of agriculture. We need to promote advancement. While agriculture is a heritage, we need to look forward and embrace positive change within the industry. Hurricane Katrina victims were not looking for technology; they were pleading for the product of American agriculturalists such as food and clothing.

Agriculture is essential to the American way of life. We need to encourage the youth of today and excite them about becoming actively involved. I believe it will be you and I and not farm policy alone that will waiver these unintended consequences and secure a place for agriculture in America's future. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Erin. Also, our next question is from Kevin Kessler. He's the state director for 4-H. Kevin, if we could have you stand up?

MR. KEVIN KESSLER: Hi. It's a pleasure for me to address you on behalf of 4-H. I want to let you know, 4-H is alive and well here the state of Utah. We have about 130,000 youth involved in the program. Of those youth that are involved, we have over 30,000 who have agricultural related projects they work on during the year in 4-H.

It's been my experience that of many of these youth who are very interested in going back into agricultural production as many of them have come off the farm but find themselves being squeezed out or not having the opportunity to get back in. That is true for myself and some of our associates that work with 4-H on the state level also. I came from a three-generation family farm, married a farm girl, so the story about being able to inherit it or marry it doesn't work in my case either. It might be a little slow for me, I guess.

But what we want to do is, we want to be able to give our youth a hope that they can proceed in the area of agriculture, and the agriculture isn't just something that you learn through 4-H or through FFA and then when you graduate from high school you go on and pursue a different degree or a different profession because you don't have the opportunity to buy back into the agriculture production industry.

Some of the same farm policies or farm bills that have helped my father and his father stay in agriculture over the years are the same things that are causing some of our youth not to be able to get into agriculture because as the farm becomes more tied to government programs it makes it more difficult for them to buy into it.

So I think the thing we need to look at here with our youth in mind so some of those 30,000 kids in 4-H who have agricultural programs can have a glimmer of hope that they might be able to enter back into the industry is, find ways to promote it very similar to the comments

made by FFA, so they can pursue their dream of being involved in agriculture for another generation. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Kessler.

Just a reminder to keep your comments brief. We're going to start now with the east microphone, and then we will alternate between microphones. You'll have two minutes. If you'd like to line up at the microphone to make sure your comment is heard you're welcome to do that. So with that said, let's go ahead and step up to the microphones and let the Secretary know what you've got to say. If you'd please state your name, also what interest you might have in the Farm Bill, and your city and state, please. Thank you.

SEC. JOHANNIS: While we're getting people organized I might just let you know that we started all our forums by hearing from 4-H and FFA, two really great programs. I participated in them when I was young, and it's kind of our effort to reach out and hear from those programs that impact the lives of young people who we hope will be interested and get involved in production agriculture. So that was the reason for that first testimony there. And it looks like we're ready to go, Kevin.

MODERATOR: Let's start off with the east side if we would. Please state your name.

MR. SCOTT CUE (sp): My name is Scott Cue. I'm a county committee chairman from Uintah County over in Vernal, Utah area. We ranch on public lands and what I'd like to address is, question number four. And a year ago Deputy Secretary Moseley came to Salt Lake. I was at a question and answer deal he put on.

I talked about how a lot of the programs don't really benefit us that are relying upon some of our public rangelands although our private lands are the nucleus of our operations, and if we're going to get into some of this habitat and conservation that's dealing with private land we need to take into consideration the public lands.

He said he likes to fix things and if we could come up with a program that was similar to something already in place it's a lot easier to modify it than it is to create a whole new one. After some extensive visiting with a lot of different producers around the state, we come up with an idea that's similar to the CRP. We presented it to him after working with our state director and stuff down in Loa last year when he came out to award a grant for some work done with the sage chickens down there.

And he sent me an e-mail afterward that said he felt like our idea had some good merit but it would be interesting -- he was kind of interested in working on the challenge. Since then I understood he has some health problems and is possibly not with the department anymore.

We'd just like to let you know that we'd appreciate it if you could look at what we proposed. I've got a copy of it if there's some place we can give that to you.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Bring it up.

MODERATOR: Thank you. I'll let him bring that up quickly and then go to the west microphone. Okay. Please.

MR. LOREN MOENCH, JR.: Thank you. Mr. Secretary and other distinguished guests, my name is Loren Moench, Jr., and I am chairman of the Utah State Fair Board, and I would like to welcome you to Utah and to one of the best fairs in the nation. We are celebrating our 150th

year as a fair, and our theme this year is All Your Wildest Dreams Will Come True. That is also my hope for the 2007 Farm Bill.

[Laughter.]

I've been president of the Utah Wool Growers Association and president of the American Sheep Industry Association, and I am currently serving as a member of the American Lamb Board, a position appointed last year by your predecessor, Secretary Veneman.

But today I come to speak about the Farm Bill as a sheep and cattle rancher. My grandparents started our ranch in 1921. And for over 85 years we have worked to provide food and fiber for America and the world.

We are striving to maintain clean water and open space for wildlife. The programs of conservation and production put forth by the Department of Agriculture have supported us as we have worked towards these goals. And we appreciate the excellent FSA workers and other USDA workers helping us get through the paperwork that's involved.

Specifically in your asking for comments, the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center should be continued. The wool LDP program should be continued. The NAP (sp) program should be continued. The retained Ewe Lamb Program should be continued, and this was the main reason that for the first time in 15 years the sheep industry numbers have increased. And the livestock, the risk program for the sheep industry, needs to have a pilot program that could help the young people get into business.

Last but not least, in all the conservation programs that help the rancher improve the land meeting President Bush's goal to work together. With the sheep industry passing the sheep checkoff in February with an 80 percent positive vote, we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Thank you for coming to Utah and listening to our concerns. I really feel America can compete with any country to provide our people with safe, wholesome and delicious food and with warm protective fiber if we have fewer regulations and more incentives to improve the beautiful land over which we are stewards.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Time's up. We'll now go to the east end.

MR. JOEL FRANDSEN: Mr. Secretary, I'm Joel Frandsen. I'm the state forester with Utah Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands. And I'd like to talk on item 4, the farm policy on conservation and environmental goals.

We believe the new Farm Bill needs to reinforce its commitment to the family private farms. The federal government has long recognized the role of these families and nonindustrial private farms have played in providing social, environmental and economic benefits to our nation.

About 42 percent of our nation's forestlands are privately owned, and they supply about two-thirds of the nation's water and two-thirds of the wood supply along with cleaning our nation's air. For about every ton of wood grown, about one and a half tons of carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and replaced with 1.1 tons of oxygen. The point is, dead trees don't produce oxygen.

Likewise, these family farms provide countless recreation, hunting and fishing benefits.

We feel strongly the new Farm Bill should reauthorize the forestland enhancement program and it needs to provide a stronger linkage and partnership with state forestry agencies, with such programs as EQIP and with the Conservation Security Program. Strong attention really needs to be placed on dealing with invasive species as these exotic invaders are the primary threats to productive farm, range and forestlands as well as the protection of endangered species.

Finally, we need to find incentives to keeping these private forestlands intact. In the dry states such as Utah, second driest in the nation, urbanization of these forest and watershed lands is one of the greatest threats we have in providing a continuous supply of water. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. We'll go now to the west side.

MR. PAUL FRISCHKNECHT: Mr. Secretary, my name is Paul Frischknecht. As you know I farm and ranch in Central Utah, sheep and cattle and crops. The Farm Bill historically has been very much oriented to the Midwest and crop production. It has not been until most recently Farm Bills that livestock has been included. Certainly in this state livestock is a huge, huge part of our agricultural picture.

I would encourage you as the new Farm Bill is molded to be mindful of livestock, that those programs in the current Farm Bill that are available to livestock be retained and included in the new one beginning in '07 including the LDP as it relates to sheep.

Also, my former speaker and good friend Loren Moench mentioned the National Sheep Improvement Center. That specifically addresses, in the six points that have been outlined, number five-- economic development and growth. That program needs to be reauthorized in the new Farm Bill beginning in 2007. I would just echo our prior conversation, Mr. Secretary, with regard to the importance of Wildlife Services, and the impact they have on agriculture and particularly livestock production in this country and certainly play a huge, huge role in this state. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Frishneck. Go ahead, sir.

MR. TIM MUNNS: Tim Munns, past president of the Utah Cattlemen's Association, currently Beef Council chairman. Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary Johanns for coming to Salt Lake and having this listening session. Quite often us here in the West get left out and thank you for being here and we share a mutual friend in Nebraska, Harry Kinobi (sp). Tell him hello for me when you see him and I'll do the same.

Several of the questions I could address today but I'm going to address the conservation title in the 2007 Farm Bill. Rumor around here and the President stated today to Congress, he wants to keep the borders open and import and have free trade. We'd like to see a fair trade agreement on most of these trade agreements if we can have it. But in the last Farm Bill the conservation title fared pretty well and we came out on that.

Far as subsidy programs going, we all would rather get our market, our paycheck out of the market than subsidy. But truth of the matter is, if we're going to provide cheap food for the American consumer we're going to have to be subsidized (unclear) raise commodity price. That's a given. I don't know what the answer is.

But subsidy programs, conservation programs are the ones I'm going to address today. Private owned grazing lands make up one-third of the land mass in the Lower 48 states. I'm going to address grazing lands in particular. Like the prior speaker said, they've kind of been left

out. The cattle people and grazing lands and conservation items. I think we can include them in the '07 Farm Bill.

We need technical assistance on those grazing lands, and since the Food Security Act of '85 technical assistance in NRCS has been focused on conservation programs that idle productive farmland. We'd like to see some conservation programs going on to productive land, particularly grazing lands. They spend a lot of their time doing compliance and status reviews on conservation programs. We got so many of them -- CRP, GRP, WHIP, CRAP, no CREP, CSP -- excuse me. I didn't really say it. LDPs, we got LAP and NAP and then there is some crap in there, but anyway --

[Laughter]

One thing we do need between agencies is common terminology. We need common terminology between agencies so we understand these. They're overdone and uniform definitions in them programs.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Tim. Time is up.

Okay. I got a plug in for research and extensions. I told to Dr. Asman (sp) I would. We get done doing research, we're done period. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Tim. Okay, to this side.

MS. ELAINE GAUSE: Thank you. Secretary Johanns, thank you for being here and providing an example to all the future leaders here on how our leaders should listen to the people in their communities. My name is Elaine Gause. I have the great honor to be the CEO of the Girl Scouts of Utah, and we're so grateful for the funding that is included in the Farm Bill for our youth. I'm speaking specifically to question five on enhancing our rural areas.

When you talk about enhancing rural infrastructure, enhancing the opportunities for our youth is critical. They are the ones who will make us successful in answering questions 1 through 6. Specifically, Girl Scouts of Utah has put together many programs with the help of USDA through the Farm Bill.

I'll tell you a little story. Last year we had a Girl's Voice Conference where we brought together more than 200 girls from rural areas in an agricultural area where they could talk to women who had been very successful in many different walks of their lives. There were many conversations.

One in particular was with a young woman who is from a rural area. She ended up talking with a woman who does bank lending -- she has a high position in a bank -- and asked her how she was able to do that, being from a such small town herself. She took away the things that she learned. This year she's an entering senior in high school, and through her multiple efforts has been able to secure an internship with the university that she will do online and over the phone that is generally reserved for graduate students.

It is important for our students to know that they have opportunities in their rural areas, and that's why Girl Scouts has developed programs in partnership with you for them to happen in the rural communities. Our youth need to know that they have opportunities in the farming and agricultural communities where they live, not just in urban and suburban areas that seem so far out of reach.

With your continued attention to youth funding in this bill we will continue to provide the support that our girls want and need in little communities where often the only folks that are there specifically for girls.

I'm joined by our senior Girl Scout Kelsey who's going to tell you specifically about a program and then bring to you one of the examples of a mobile program that we provide to our rural communities with your help. Kelsey?

KELSEY: Hi. Thanks. I appreciate the opportunity to tell you why and how valuable the USDA grant monies have been to Girl Scouts throughout Utah. Just one of the programs Girl Scouts of Utah has implemented is our Zeke the Zebra Bucket of Fun. More than 50 buckets have been created and are being sent to all rural communities in Utah. Volunteers are able to provide this character-building program to girls ages 5 to 17 who might not otherwise have this life-changing program and resources available to them.

Simply put, it's all about the girl. So I'll just use the letters to explain the benefits and outcomes for what we are able to do in rural communities funding from the USDA.

G -- Guidance. We provide guidance and training to adults so they can provide the program to girls in safe, nonthreatening environment.

I -- It is inclusive and immediate. Communities don't have to wait for resources or materials. They don't have to wait for adults to attend trainings in other parts of the state. It's inclusive. Everyone can embrace the values taught by Zeke the Zebra.

R -- It's happening in rural communities where girls need and want a place where they feel important. R also stands for reality. It's relative to girls today. We care about stuff like this and we want to be included. We want to feel important, and we know that our unique qualities are what make us different and that's okay.

L -- Is for Leadership. More than 200 girls who have already been part of the Zeke Program in Utah are learning leadership skills. We are learning about acceptance and understanding, and it's long-lasting. The things we are learning through Girl Scout programs like Zeke Buckets of Fun will last a lifetime.

Mr. Secretary, simply remember as you talk about the needs of rural communities, don't forget the girls.

MODERATOR: Thank you. All right. We're going to go back to the east side. We're going to take two on this side just to keep our lines moving systematically here if you don't mind. Again, if you can state the question you're going to address, we'd appreciate that.

MR. BRANT ROSE (sp): Secretary Johanns, I'm glad to have you here today. I'm a rancher. My name is Brant Rose from Park Valley, Utah. I'm going to address several of the questions or try to. We're losing next-generation farmers and ranchers at a rapid pace.

The current \$200,000 owner-operator loan will not purchase anything that will sustain one family in our country. The next generation farmer or rancher will probably have to have the opportunity to lease a ranch or work into a family operation to be profitable.

The next question I believe that if the government is involved in any phase of agriculture it has to be involved to some extent in all phases of agriculture. We have a cheap food policy. At some time or other, each area of ag is going to need help. For us, the LAP program, the Crop

Disaster, the NAP programs have been very helpful. Appreciate it. Concerning the NAP program, if you sustain three consecutive years of loss though, your averages go down and thereby your payment continues to go down each consecutive year.

Perhaps also concerning the NAP program, I think this is a problem, and perhaps there is a flaw in that. We need livestock and crop disaster protection either through the Farm Bill or some other way. Thereby, every time there's a disaster we don't have to go to the Congress or to the Senate and beg for help.

Another area of concern for me is the Livestock Assistance Program for 2003 or 2004 which was announced over a year ago. The payment is still not been received. This untimeliness to me does not constitute effective distribution of assistance to our producers.

Could we please expect something more realistic in the future?

Concerning question four, we understand the increasing pressure of the government on all programs to be environmentally friendly, but we also hope common sense will prevail in the Farm Bill and that we will remember that we make our living off the land.

Finally, our local FSA and NRCS offices are operated and staffed by excellent and capable people. They have the hardest job. They help us understand you and you understand us. Don't regionalize them or do away with them for a computer or the web. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate you being concise. We're going to stay here on the east microphone. Go ahead. Step up and state your name, please.

MR. RICHARD NEILSON (sp): Thank you. Thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary. Appreciate it. My name's Richard Neilson. I'm a cattle feeder from Central Utah, and I wish to address question two, the competitiveness of our markets.

As you currently know, we're shut out of most of the world with our beef. And that's because of the BSE issue. Mr. Secretary, it's BSE got put in the refrigerator somewhere and went away. It doesn't need to be an issue any longer. We've lost enough money and disrupted our markets long enough for that. Government policy should be set so that things like BSE don't become market issues.

I also wish to address question six, how do we enhance our competitiveness? As you know, the Supreme Court has recently ruled that the beef checkoff was constitutional. That's a great win for the cattle industry, and government policy should be set so that checkoff programs are enhanced and helped along so that the research and market developments can happen.

Thank you again for your time, and thanks for coming.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Neilson. Appreciate that. We'll go to the west side now.

MR. DEE WALDRON (sp): Thank you, Secretary, for being here. Dee Waldron's my name. I live in Morgan, Utah. I'm representing the Soil Conservation Commission and UACD.

I guess the most important thing is all the Farm Bills that we have right now have really been beneficial to us and they've been talking about, but the one that comes probably the best for Utah, fits all the needs, is the CSP program which is individually prioritized for each individual farm from small to big. It takes care of all the parts in it and helps them protect their needs and

they can gain their respect from those.

The other thing is the conservation we have in Utah, we just need UACD -- that's our goal is to keep conservation going. That works with the air and water quality. I'm answering question four, sorry.

And the other thing that goes along with this is, I guess we're getting hit right now harder than anything we've ever had happen in the United States history of agriculture, suffering from the fuel prices. As we go through I just took some things out of a magazine on the way down. We spent \$300 million a day right now buying export oil into the United States. That's over \$100 billion a year we're spending.

If we took that and started using ethanol from corn and soy biodiesel and used it at a 5 or 10 percent rate and had programmed something to help people get into that thing we could help the environment because that's all environmental safe, and would really do a plus for our environment.

The other thing is, the farmer doesn't get his just need. When you go down to the store and buy a box of cereal it's like four bucks, and in that box we have like 2 cents worth of product from agriculture. And it's killing us. You buy a tractor in the '40s, commodity prices was \$4 for barley. Right now you can buy a tractor it's \$100,000 plus, and we're still getting \$4, and everything else has escalated. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Waldron. Back to the east side, please.

MR. ORSON BOYCE (sp): Mr. Secretary, my name is Orson Boyce, and I'm from Brigham City, Utah. I represent the seed industry there. I'd like to thank you on behalf of our industry for your service to our nation and your service to agriculture and for being here to hear our thoughts and concerns about the upcoming Farm Bill.

I'd like to address question number four, conservation. We have many issues regarding conservation that are, I like to think in the seed industry we're kind of where the rubber meets the road on that in a great way. What we've seen, policies in the Forest Service have prevented the use of many of our seed cultivars that have actually been developed by other USDA research agencies.

For example, the plant material center and the Agriculture Research Service, ARS, have spent literally lifetimes of research on developing new cultivars that could be used in conservation. The Forest Service in the past has used very cheap, inexpensive introduced species and now they swung completely the other way in favor of local source-identified ecotypes.

So in some cases seed that was collected and grown less than 50 miles away from a particular burn have not been used. So the result of this has been that the Forest Service has allowed literally thousands, hundreds of thousands of acres that have been burned not to be reseeded. This is a serious tragedy. Those ecosystems have not been allowed to restore in a proper way or a timely manner. And so we see invasive weeds and a burn cycle which is very close.

In conclusion I'd like to recommend two things to help solve that. One is that the Forest Service be mandated to reclaim or replant at least 50 percent of every burn over 100 acres. And that the subsidy be provided for small farmers on a per-acre basis for growing native seeds and the result for this will be cleaner air, cleaner water, and a heritage that we can pass on to our children. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. That's time, Mr. Boyce. Appreciate that. We're going to go here to the west side, please.

MR. DARVELL DARN (sp): Mr. Secretary, Darvell Darn. I farm in Northern Utah and Southern Idaho. And probably the questions I may would like to address quickly is maybe one and three and four about our young people and maybe not being able to farm.

Now I started early full-time out of school in the early '50s experiencing what we thought then was probably low prices but fuel was around 13 to 14 cents a gallon and our tractors we were dry farmers so we'd farm with big tractors, (unclear). They was costing about \$8500, combines around \$11,000 or \$12,000. Wheat was sold for \$2.50 a bushel, easy to figure 4,000 bushels of wheat would have bought a combine or a tractor.

Today our tractors are running over \$200,000 the size we're using in the big combines, over \$200,000. Guess with the price of wheat which is sitting around the target are the loan price usually at around \$2.95 and less, and it sure doesn't add up when you're staking 50,000 bushels to buy a tractor or a combine.

So therefore I fear down the road for my young sons that are taking over the operation and trying to stay competitive in this agricultural market. Also is, it sets this price that the millers and the bakers are all reaping in these prices here locally in the United States. Soon as that product leaves their hands and is either made into cereal or bread or whatever, consumers are paying a lot more money. But the farmers in turn are not.

I'm trying to get larger is maybe not even the answer. One thing else is our CRP, very vital for the state of Utah, a drier state. It looks like the way it's going that they're going to eliminate it in the extreme dry west is the point system --

MODERATOR: Mr. Darn, that's two minutes. Appreciate that. Thank you. All right, back to east side, please.

MR. MONTY WESTON: Mr. Secretary, Monty Weston, president of the Utah Cattlemen's. Enjoyed visiting with you last spring as well. I want to address the first question, farm policy as the first gentleman did on this side of the aisle.

In the West we are primarily owned by the federal government, and we run on federal government land. And so a lot of these farm policies that come out are circled around the Midwest and the area where they grow the wheat and a lot of the big crops.

We don't really qualify out here in the West for the programs such as EQIP and some of those things. A lot of that is geared away from us where we run as grazing people and grazing the lands.

And so I'd like to see something put into the Farm Bill especially for the western states that would help us to be able to qualify for these programs a little more readily. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Weston. West side, please.

MR. ALAN SMITH (sp): Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for this opportunity to be able to comment on the proposed 2007 Farm Bill. My name is Alan Smith. I'm a third generation rancher from Northeastern Utah. I've been able to run sheep and cattle in the three eastern counties of our state. Primarily I want to address my comments here today towards the

Grassland Reserve Program known as the GRP. But my comments will go towards questions 2 through 6.

The NRCS has chosen to obligate 1.2 million through a competitive process to my family partnership Deep Creek Investments towards the acquisition of a conservation easement through a GRP. Utah Department of Wildlife Resources has also agreed to fund an easement. The UDWR has designated these CD lands in western Duchesne County as being a very critical wildlife habitat for both elk, deer, and greater sage grouse.

In addition to the GRP funding we will be receiving EQIP funds to cost-share some additional brush management and range plantings along with a few stock and wildlife watering ponds. These projects are just a few that we have already been accomplished with the help of the old SCS and now the NRCS.

Technical and funding help from the NRCS federal programs have enabled us over the past 16 years to vastly increase our grazing capacity. These past present and future practices are a win/win for both domestic livestock and wildlife including the great earth sage grouse and other sagebrush obligate species plus numerous other offsite benefits such as improved downstream things.

I offer these simply to show the importance of the GRP program. I would hope we'd continue those; in the western states here we do need to have these private grazing portions. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Smith, appreciate your comments. East side, please.

MR. RANDY SESSIONS (sp): Randy Sessions. I'm from Morgan County. I've owned and operated my own operation from 1979. I'm unfamiliar with many of these acronyms we've heard here today because I do not use the farm program, and that's why I'm here today.

There is a website out there, an EWG website. It's an Environmental Working Group; it's a green website. And as all websites, you have to take information kind of interesting. But the problem I see is, the information they put out there, the majority of the money, 30 percent of the funds that are received in the United States are received by very few operations. Only 30 percent of the operations in the United States receive funds. 10 percent of that 30 percent receive almost 70 percent of the money.

In the website I scrutinize my own county because I'm familiar with that. Out of 131 recipients from '93 to 2005, 50 percent of the money was received by 10 operations. By scrutinizing that and looking at extended members, that became 60 percent. I realized that doesn't happen in other places, but it's obvious that the money according to item number 3 on the questions, the distribution's not right.

The problem is, as we move forward what's the solution? I think solution is we can do away with -- I'd like to see the farm program go away for five years, and has life has proven cream comes to the top. Those needs will rise, and we'll be able to evaluate and look at some things that maybe need to be out there. But what do you do in the meantime?

We're going to have disasters forever. I think it would be appropriate if a farmer or rancher wants disaster protection they can buy insurance. This last year we lost a barn, a tractor and some hay to a fire. Well, I had personal insurance with other people who were willing to take that risk with me, and I got through my personal disaster. I didn't have to go to the government to get me through that disaster.

Here in the state of Utah I have used an ardlle (ph) loan. An ardlle is a revolving agriculture loan where it was funded by the legislation. We're able to go get money out of that, borrow it, and do projects on our own places. I think that's very appropriate because I don't think it's fair for a person in New York or California to put a division fence on my personal property. If it's good for me, it's good for me, and I do it. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Sessions. I might just mention for those wondering if we're going to break, we will break at an hour and a half, have about a ten-minute intermission at that point. So keep your questions coming. Let's go to the west side, please.

MR. ARTHUR DOUGLAS: Mr. Secretary, Arthur Douglas, president of the Utah Farmers Union. It's great visiting with you earlier, but there's one question that we didn't touch on out of the six you've got. First of all I'd still like to say that most of the audience maybe don't know but I think you're the first secretary we've had here since the days of Jimmy Carter and Bob Bergland, and so I hope everybody in this audience realizes how much we appreciate you coming out here and listening to our concerns in the West.

Question number two goes on to say about the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture and the global market. Not that we're opposed to trade, but I think we need to take a look at the trade surplus we had in the mid '90s and we're in a trade deficit right now. We need to, for these future trade agreements, we need to be on a fair and level playing field with America's farmers and ranchers here. How can we compete with cheap labor, environmental standards these other countries are -- we just can't compete against them.

I'd hope the goals of the administration and Congress today would be to bring a word that you very seldom hear mentioned anymore, and that's parity -- back into the hands of the American farmer and rancher. We're so far off from that right now. For example I think the last price we heard a bushel of wheat should be worth around \$8.30 something. Yesterday I think it was \$2.80, low protein wheat. A lot of the guys around here's going to have a hard time getting rid of it other than for feed.

But again, I appreciate you coming here and thanks for your time.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll move to the east side now.

MR. TRACY LIVINGSTON: I'm Tracy Livingston with Wasatch Wind. We're a developer of wind farms in the state. We're out of Wasatch County. And I want to address question number give in support of the 9006 section of the Farm Bill which the title of it is Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program. We, this morning received a check for half a million dollars.

I believe we're the first recipient of that program, the 9006 program, to build a wind farm in Spanish Fork, Utah. We are very supportive of this program. We believe at this point that program should continue, especially considering that wind projects now have become competitive with other forms of fossil generation like natural gas.

Plus, these wind farms as you may know many of your farmers, a lot of the wind in this state is out in the rural areas, and it's ripe for harvest at this point. And with putting wind farms in your area, it's a rural economic incentive program. This program and the \$500,000 you receive in this program I think are critical to developing more projects like this in the rural parts of Utah to create jobs and bring in construction and other related activities.

So we strongly encourage the continuation of this program, and we encourage the farmers here also to contact the local USDA office to see what they can do to make that possible for your own land. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Tracy. Let's move to the west side, please.

MR. BILL RIGBY: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming to the crossroads of the West. I'm Bill Rigby. I'm a row crop farmer, third generation. My grandfather settled on the land we now farm in 1855. I'm the former president of Utah Association of Conservation Districts and a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts Board. My question is on number four of course, and I would like to see the conservation districts have more of a say in what goes on.

You know we've been the sister to NRCS or SCS for some 70 years since the days it started, and yet we keep being ignored. I think that EQIP as much as it goes on private property should be equally administered by SCS or NRCS and the conservation districts. And I would appreciate that. We have some 3,000 districts in the United States and 15,000 supervisors elected by their local peers. Mr. Secretary, I have a brief here I would like to leave with you if I may. Can I bring that up?

(pause in proceedings)

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Rigby. Appreciate that. Let's move on over to the east side now, please.

MS. SARAH WRIGHT: Hi. Thank you, Secretary. I am pleased to be here. My name is Sarah Wright, and I'm with Utah Clean Energy. Over the past two years we've had the benefit of partnering with the USDA, the USDOE, the state energy program, and the Utah Farm Bureau to educate citizens, farmers, ranchers and rural business people about the benefits of the Clean Energy titles. We're pleased that we got our first award this year.

Other states-- Minnesota -- they have really learned how to receive these awards, and there are many community windfarms, farms, wind projects that are owned by farmers and ranchers keeping all those economic benefits in the farm and also making agricultural operations a lot more cost effective.

We would ask that you would continue and expand these programs. I think that as energy is becoming -- we know prices are volatile, they're rising. Farmers have a very slim margin. So being able to develop new crops, wind, biomass, solar, as well as the energy efficiency program, is an extremely important program that I think a lot of people don't know about.

Farmers can increase their efficiency probably between 20 and 50 percent. The Farm Bill has currently incentives to do so. Grant programs. And we would like to help people learn about these programs and see how they can improve their margins and be more cost competitive going forward. So thank you for these programs. I ask as energy becomes a more critical part of our growing economy with diminishing fossil supplies, that you expand this program so that farmers can not only be food suppliers for the nation but energy suppliers for the nation. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Let's move to the west side.

MR. BOB NAEREBOUT: Thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, my name is Bob Naerebout, and I snuck over the border today. I'm from Idaho. And I represent the Idaho Dairymen's Association, and we really appreciate you being here and having the opportunity to

address.

We'd like to address question number six and question number three. First let me quickly explain, Idaho Dairymen's Association represents all the dairy producers in the state of Idaho. We roughly have 727 dairy producers left, but we're still really a small state and not in dairy production but numbers. Our average farm is about 500 cows but 200 of our dairies are less than 200 cows with our smallest being 12.

On question number six, addressing research, we want to make sure you recognize that we feel USDA is the place to have the research, particularly with the accountability we're being held to on (unclear) and the Clean Air Act and laws that didn't pertain to agriculture. We feel that research needs to be with you. We are adamantly opposed -- I believe you have a request to have some come out of checkoff funding to fund EPA air quality research. We are adamantly opposed to that.

Secondly, on government dairy policies, our board even though our board reflects our industry with a lot of small dairy producers they're opposed to the MILC program. They're proposed to the continuation of the MILC program. When asked the hard question whether or not the caps were lifted on the MILC program, they made that hard decision and said, bad policy is bad policy, we'd continue to be opposed.

We also feel it's time to reassess the need and the purpose of federal orders in today's light and the support programs in today's light. The purpose and function in 1938 hopefully was different than what it is in 2005, and so on the Farm Bill debate we think those programs need to be reassessed and relooked at.

Our board has put a resolution in front of our members to vote on in November calling for the elimination of those type of programs. Thank you, sir.

SEC. JOHANNIS: When that resolution is done, could you send it over to us?

MR. NARABOUT: Most assuredly.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Okay, great. Thanks.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. Just a reminder that since we're alternating mikes, if a mike is not close to your mouth feel free to move that prior to your speaking. Go ahead on the east side, please.

MR. CLARK WILLIS: Clark Willis, farmer from Rich County and past president of Utah Wool Growers sitting now as a board of director on the National Improvement Sheep Center. A couple of things I'd like to talk about and it's going to be number three.

One is the sheep center. It was funded in 1997 at a \$50 million, and at the present time we're still authorized \$22 million that we haven't got yet. We need that extra \$22 million to do some of the work that we have. We do grants for lamb marketing, lamb safety and any type of research, a lot of universities have done a lot of research with some of our grants. So I'm encouraging you to step forward and fund that.

The other thing, the sheep people--

About four years ago I was on a national committee that was put together to figure out ways to increase the funding for the few western states, four states that were under funded, Utah

being one of those. And Utah being the fourth largest -- (audio break)

-- attention to sheep, and that would help us come up into funding and risk management insurance. I was at a conference last week in Jackson, Wyoming. As I understand, we're one of the few commodities that doesn't have risk management insurance. And about the only one that doesn't have some kind of a protection as far as -- and I know they're very, very limited -- but protection on import duties.

The other thing I'd like to mention, my time's about up, is predator control. It's one of the biggest problems the sheep people have in the West, and it has been increased in funding but control on the ground has not been increased for the last 10 years. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming to Utah. We appreciate you're visiting.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. Let's go to the west side. Keep the comments coming.

MR. LELAND HOGAN: My name is Leland Hogan. I'm a farmer and a rancher from Tooele County. And I'm also president of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation. It's a pleasure to see you again and to visit with you the last time you was here and be able to visit with you again today.

As you know, Utah is deemed an underserved state to all of its farmers and ranchers as far as USDA is concerned. I have a prepared statement that I would like to give to you when I'm finished that will cover all these things in more detail.

The 2002 Farm Bill is working as Congress intended. The 2007 Farm Bill must continue to ensure the competitive advantage provided us by our soils and our climate while not holding back our productive capacity through inappropriate government actions.

On the conservation. Conservation payments provide broader based industry incentives that could be important means for providing farm and ranch income in the future. If farmers are offered a voluntary incentive based incentive to promote desired environmental outcomes, farmers and ranchers will overwhelm America and provide soil conservation, water quality, air quality and equality for wildlife and its habitat.

The EQIP program has done a great deal in providing funds for AFAL-KAFAL (ph) project we had here in the state of Utah that's been acclaimed across the nation. In trade, the U.S. must be the clear world leader and base its actions on science and not politics or court actions. Any attempt to modify the current Farm Bill prior to the completion of the Doha Round of negotiations will place U.S. farmers and ranchers in a serious competitive disadvantage.

In rural assistance, urban sprawl and the declining rural community concerns don't have easy answers. And a one-size-fits-all solution should not be attempted in the 2007 Farm Bill.

MODERATOR: Sir, time is up. I appreciate. That's your two minutes. thank you so much. And you're going to present us a document, right?

MR. HOGAN: Yes, I will.

MODERATOR: While he's presenting that document if I could just mention, some of our young people in line have got to go back to school. If there's anyone that's willing to let some of our young FFA members step forward, we'd love to hear from them -- if you're willing to do that. Okay?

[Laughter.]

MODERATOR: They don't want to go back to school, do they? (laughs) Okay, east side, sir. Thank you

MR. RONDEL PERKINS (sp): Mr. Secretary, I'm Rondel Perkins. I live in Idaho and own land in Idaho and Utah, and I'd like to address one, three and five. It has to do with the CRP I think.

And I'm not going to be very popular when this is over, but I think the CRP is a welfare payment, and it is giving a lot of people pensions or whatever. But anyway, the number one is the new farmers. As long as the CRP is there, land will be too high for new farmers to get it or buy it. Why should someone sell their land when they're assured of a pretty nice payment? And they're too old to farm it, but they're not going to sell it.

And what it's done to the rural community, it's ruined the rural community. They don't hire no people, they buy nothing. A lot of the checks for the CRP goes completely out of the state, completely out of the county, and in my county one check goes completely out of the country.

The CRP should be planted back to grain. Grains and made into fuel so we're not dependent on the world for oil. We need to make our own. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate your comments. West side, please.

MS. SUZANNE REESE (sp): Suzanne Reese, Box Elder County commissioner, Box Elder County--known in Utah as the breadbasket of Utah. And sir, I'm going to speak just opposite to what he said, start speaking on the CRP. I think that we need to fund the CRP to a level that keeps up with inflation and keeps the farmers in parity. I think this is one of the few ways that we can get the young farmer back into agriculture because we know for sure that the production of the land is not equal the land payment, and they need all the help they can get.

I think we need to look seriously at conservation programs and the inflation level. I'm also very concerned about the beef production and bringing in beef from other countries. As we know it costs more to raise beef here in our country because of all our requirements. And we are grateful to have the safety requirements we have, but as we bring them in from the other countries it's cheaper for them to produce them and they don't have to meet the safety requirements. We need to have protection for our beef raisers that it can be an equal trading, an equal playing field.

Also I'm concerned with government programs like the NRCS has been mentioned. These programs need to be flexible and need to be able to meet our areas and not a one-size-fits-all across the country because we are such a diverse country.

And I'm concerned about another growing thing that's happening to us, and that is the way the land is being used for recreation. We need to look seriously at trespass laws. A lot of our erosion and problems we're having is being caused by the ATVs. And appreciate you being in Utah, and I'll hand in something with more detail. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mrs. Reese. Okay. We're going to come back to the east side here. Just state your name.

MR. MARK GIVENS (sp): Mr. Secretary, Mark Givens, Utah Dairymen, and president

of the Utah Dairy Association. And I will address questions number two and three, maybe three first.

As you know, the cumbersome and slow nature of the federal milk marketing orders has just become such a dinosaur that needs to be looked at. We voted out federal milk market order in this area because of that. When it takes 18 months between a petition process and a decision and implementation, 18 months to three years is just too slow to respond to the market.

We are good dairymen. We can compete, we'll compete with anybody. And this is I guess to question number two-- when you are competing against product that's shipped into the United States that's subsidized to the point that they are from Australia, New Zealand, Europe especially, it's hard to compete with those things when there are programs in place to place tariffs on those things but they're not being enforced.

And the enforcement of those programs needs to take care. When the DEIP program has money sitting on the table and it's not used to take care of exporting that and that's just wasted to clear the market for the product here is very frustrating to dairymen.

When we look at dairy policy and you look at the grain, it's fair from the top to the bottom. It doesn't discriminate against large producers and small producers. We have many dairy programs that are regionalized, discriminate against large producers, and we have mostly small producers in Utah.

But the gentleman -- well the guy from Idaho, he's not a gentleman. He did say it well -- bad policy is bad policy. And we need to address that. I hope in the next Farm Bill we can have producer input; that we don't have so much processor and upper level staff input for it. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. I might mention we're going to be taking a break here shortly. We'll take our comments from the west side, and then Secretary your judgment call-- can we have our young people talk before we take our break? Okay. We'll come to the west side then, please.

MR. VERN WILSON: Well, I'm Vern Wilson. I'm a long-time sheepherder. Been at it for five generations, and I'll tell you those old ewes have bought lots of shoes, built lots of schoolhouses and lots of roads. And they've produced some awful good citizens in this United States. And that's a solid industry in which I represent. Therefore I would like to encourage the Secretary to continue the Rural Development part of the Sheep Center.

Now recently we had an occasion as president of the Utah World Marketing we were forced out financially out of warehouse. But very fortunately the Sheep Center financed us to another location and enabled us to buy a warehouse, which is the only warehouse with Sacramento and Texas and into Belview, South Dakota. And I would encourage you to refinance and to help that system.

Also I would like to encourage you to retain the Ewe Lamb Program. If my posterity is going to stay in the sheep business with the world market the way it is and the competition that we have with the wool and lamb, then we need that support that Ewe-Lamb Program.

Now I'm an old man, been in it for 85 years, and I just think I'm solid in asking for these commitments or I wouldn't be here. Thank you very much, Secretary. Appreciate you being here, and I hope you come back with a good broad-minded solution. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. Okay. We're going to go to our east side here, and we'll just hear from our three FFA members and then we're going to take a 10 and a half minute break. Those of you in line just mark your spot. We'll get right back to you after the break.

MR. COLTON FILMORE: All right, Mr. Secretary. My name is Colton Filmore representing the interests of farms in Emery County. Answering questions of one, three and five.

We members of the FFA are concerned with the cost-share program percentages and rates. It is our hopes that current levels will be carried over into the new bill. We are also concerned with incentives that will be continued in the programs. Lastly a few number of our local members are interested in an all-energy bill that will keep farmers in production. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MS. JESSE MAY BAXTER (sp): Jesse May Baxter, state FFA reporter, answering question one. As we started out today, you notice that we started this meeting with representation from your 4-H and FFA members-- the future of agriculture within the United States. Without these two programs, nothing can be accomplished. I'm sure many people along with you, Secretary, had 4-H and FFA background and have gotten you to where you need to be today. If we do not keep our national support and national funding for these organizations, there aren't going to be opportunities for us to become agriculturalists.

If you look out into the audience today, what all the FFA and 4-H members rise -- these are the future of agriculture. They are here today representing the state of Utah. They are in agriculture, and they want the chance. We hope that you can help us keep the national FFA going throughout the years. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Miss Baxter.

[Applause.]

MR. BLAKE WALTON: Hello, Mr. Secretary. My name's Blake Walton. I'm from the Wasatch FFA chapter in Hebrew City. And I'd like to address the fact of the rapid development of our farm and ranching lands. Many of our students within our county are very active with the Farm Service, and they have bright futures in agriculture. But it's going to be hard for them to move on into those fields when there's no land, when your county becomes full of homes. I know that's not something that just affects our little county but it affects most of the counties in Hebrew and in the state.

And I just like to bring that to your attention. Thanks.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Blake. Appreciate that. That's going to wrap up this segment. I appreciate the preparation, FFA members. That was very concise and actually under time. We're going to take a 10-minute break. We'll be back and the Secretary will be listening to more of your questions. So feel free to get up and stretch those legs and take a break.

[Recess. Off and on the record.]

MODERATOR: All right. With that said, if we're all ready to go, sound's good? Looks like we're ready to go again. We'll start out now on the west side, and if you'd state your name, your city and then of course your interest in the Farm Bill. The question would be helpful as

well, which question.

MR. JOE HILL: I'm Joe Hill, state chairman of the Farm Service Agency, and I'm not talking too much about the questions. But I'd like to take this time to thank the Secretary for coming into the state and also I had an opportunity to meet him a few months ago up at the Miller Packing Company. I made the comment at that time that I think this is the first time a secretary of agriculture had visited the state of Utah, and now here we have the opportunity, Mr. Secretary, to appreciate hearing and seeing you again.

The thing I'd like to express here isn't anything to do with Farm Bill, but it has been very important to the agriculture people of Utah. First I'd like to thank the USDA and administration for the great programs that have been administered through the Farm Service Agency under the direction of our state executive director Lloyd Critchfield (sp), and implemented by our very qualified county offices. Every producer in this room has had the benefit from those programs, the last five years of the severe drought that has taken place here in the state of Utah.

And we want to let you know how much we appreciate that.

So the other things I have of concern is what we can do to help the young people stay in business --

MODERATOR: Sir, we're up to our two minute limit. I apologize. In order to hear everybody's comments we're going to ask you --

MR. HILL: Thank you.

MODERATOR: If you'd like to submit your comments again, we'll take those at the back. Okay, back to the east side. Thank you.

MR. THAYNE MICHELSON: My name is Thayne Michelson. I work with the Utah Association of Conservation Districts. I hope today the comments I make will represent everyone in this room.

One thing that has not been addressed that I think is a critical issue to Utah is water. Now we don't want as much as New Orleans got, but certainly we'd like to have a little more than we usually get. Since that's not up to us to decide how much comes our way I think it's important that we utilize what we have to the best efficiency possible. It's a critical area that we look at ways to manage that water, whether through irrigation delivery systems, whether through water for drinking. All those issues are very critical for Utah.

Every dollar that's spent not only goes to help improve water efficiency on cropland but it also helps the ability to bring more production agriculture to Utah.

Up in the north end of the state where I work here's been huge strides in irrigation efficiency due to the delivery systems that have been put into place. We appreciate what money's been available. There's a great need for more of it. As we took a resource survey just recently the high priority once again became irrigation water management issues. And so we would appreciate more of that availability to help along these ways. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. The west side, please.

MR. DALLAS HOLMES: Thank you. I am Dallas Holmes from Utah State University, the land grant university for the state of Utah, and representing Extension and our Agricultural

Experiment Station. I'd like to address issue number six, how should agricultural product development, marketing, research related issues be addressed in the next Farm Bill?

I can tell you that if we are going to continue to strengthen both urban and rural development in the state of Utah it must be by strengthening the ongoing use of formula funds in this state. The reduction of formula funds over the past 33 years that I've been associated with cooperative extension in Utah has demonstrated that as we continue to reduce formula funds in our Farm Bill we continue to provide less and less opportunity to serve the citizens of this state both in programs as well as in research.

Those are critical to the farmers and ranchers as well as the urban citizens in the state of Utah. Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your being here. We encourage your continued support of formula funds to strengthen agriculture, the premier activity in the state of Utah. Thank you, sir.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Holmes. On the east side now, please.

MR. RANDON WILSON: My name is Randon Wilson. I'm a lawyer here in Salt Lake City. I appreciate the opportunity to speak a few moments. I practice in the cooperative area. I grew up on a dairy farm in Idaho. And I've been involved in helping growers integrate into the sugar industry all across the northern tier-- Amalgamated Sugar, Western Sugar, Michigan Sugar, of course Western Sugar involved growers in your state of Nebraska.

I'm also now working with the sugar growers, sugar cane growers in Louisiana to integrate those growers forward into the market. And I've been impressed with two things. One is, we need to foster co-ops to help strengthen agriculture where the government cannot do it or will not do it.

Secondly, we need to foster the sugar program in the next Farm Bill. We need to be sure that we do not become too reliant upon foreign sugar and that we find ways to preserve the literally thousands of family farms in this country who rely on the sugar beet and sugar cane for their livelihood.

And I think the use of cooperatives is a very important part of this integration and of preserving family farms. I think we need to foster cooperatives in a more meaningful way.

And one of the worries I have about that is that we've ceased educating people about cooperatives, and there's a study now, Capper-Volstead, which is reviewing that. And I think that the Secretary needs to come on record supporting Kemper-Volstead.

MODERATOR: Thank you for your comments. Let's move to the west side, please.

MR. TIM WAGNER: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Glad you're here today to listen to all the great people of Utah. My name is Tim Wagner. I direct the Utah Smart Energy Campaign for the Sierra Club here in the state of Utah. I should mention that I grew up on a small family farm in Iowa. Farming is near and dear to my heart, and I am so pleased to see all these people here today talking on their behalf.

It breaks my heart to go back to Iowa and even throughout rural Utah and see the rural economies just literally falling apart, and it's been occurring over the last several decades as we all know. I support any measure that would bolster those rural economies, but what I see from strictly what I do now is advocate for the development of renewable energy, particularly within our rural economies.

Wind of course is a big deal back in my home state of Iowa where now I think it's the third largest producer of wind energy in the country. And it's really enabled to keep a lot of small family farms on their land. And I can see we can do the same thing here in Utah through biomass, geothermal, solar, whatever. And I really want to see that supportive measures in the new Farm Bill come through. So thank you so much for being here today.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Wagner. Now to the east side, please?

MR. MIKE SPENCER (sp): Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming to Utah. My name is Mike Spencer. I live in Yosta (sp), Utah, which is probably more rural than where you come from. I'd like to address number one and number four.

Number one, I live on a family ranch. We have nine employees; seven of those are family members, myself and two older brothers, and we are in the dilemma how to pass it down to my son and my nephews just because of the inheritance problem. They don't cost real estate as such anymore -- it's a real dilemma, and I don't know the Farm Bill can address that. But from a family farm situation we are in a dilemma. Looks like we'll never retire. I don't want to retire, but I'd like to semi retire.

And on number four, CRP, I'd like to see something addressed, some water conservation programs put into it. I live up in an area where the underground aquifers are being pumped and depleted. Some of those pumps are going to have to be shut off. We're looking at it right now. But if that could be addressed some way, same way as the land CRP, conserve some of the underground water resources.

And that's about all I have to say, but I will say one thing. When you get through, everybody get through here, the sheep-growers, wool-growers are serving a leg of lamb over in the tent. It was very good. I don't grow sheep, but it was a very good leg of lamb. Thank you.

MODERATOR: That's good representation when you have someone from Yosta. Appreciate your comments. Let's move over to the west side, please.

SEC. JOHANNIS: You know I should mention, I had some of that lamb for lunch. It was really good. So thank you.

MR. VAN JENKINS: Mr. Secretary, my name is Van Jenkins. I'm a part-time farmer now from Cache Valley. We've been involved in grain. I have two sons that work with me. In the 40 years I've farmed and witnessed all these kind of forums and programs and farm programs that's come out, there's always one basic problem with it. And that is, the farmer never gets paid. He never gets paid for what he does in the marketplace, and I'm not talking about wheat, cattle or milk or anything else. It's all of them in general. And you want to keep young people on the farm, then pay them. Make it so that they can make a living there.

Just in our county alone a month ago there was 1,300 acres sold at an auction in different parcels. Not one farmer bought one acre of it. It was bought by real estate investors, doctors, lawyers, at inflated prices. It was impossible. We all know now up there that there will be never any acres ever sold up there again to farming or to farmers.

Just a couple of things on some of the programs. The LDP payment, a year ago I called our county office and says, what's our LDP payment? Three cents. Why is it three cents? Well, it's based on our local market. I said, well our local market is below loan rate. I says, where's the local market at? It's in Portland, Oregon, where it's \$1.50 more. So they've turned around and offered a program at the same time they take it away from you.

There's too many of those things. The farm programs all over, all they've ever done is offered band-aid pennies, and we need dollars.

We custom-cut grain and it's got to the point now we travel through Utah and Idaho that somebody is going to lose because when they figure up the costs and everything else of the price of grain at \$0.40 bushel, somebody can't make it. And it's to the point this year that a lot of farmers are looking at that I've talked to that we can't even go over the ground this fall.

MODERATOR: Your time is up, sir. Appreciate that. Thanks for your comments. Let's move back over to the east side.

MR. SCOTT SANDAL (sp): Mr. Secretary, Scott Sandal from Northern Utah, currently a beef producer. I've participated in a lot of farm programs through grain and cattle over my lifetime. First point, I'd really like to express appreciation to the local people that we have on the ground with FSA and NRCS. And I'd encourage you to try not -- keep those people close to us.

It concerns me when we see an idea to regionalize offices. That would to me be really difficult for a lot of our producers to participate in the programs the way they are if they have to travel further than they already do. And appreciate what those local people do for us at a local level.

My second point is addressing question number four, Conservation Reserve Program. And it has been a real blessing for I feel myself, our county, the people around us. I think over the years it's been tweaked and changed enough that you can really appreciate that it's doing a lot of benefit.

My one concern is, as we go to renew a huge amount of acreage in the next two years that we are competing on an erodability index against high-moisture areas. My concern and hope that you would somehow allow us with our more arid climate to compete in our bidding process so we don't get somehow taken out of that because we don't have enough rainfall. Our soils are fragile. We still have the benefit, but somehow we need to play evening against those higher-moisture areas. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Sandal. Out of the west side.

MR. RAY ROLLE (sp): My name is Ray Rolle. Family farmer down in Santaquin. We grow cherries, apples and peaches, third generation farmer. With regards to questions one, two and three I have several of my children in the FFA program, and that's a big question for them -- how are they going to be able to farm into the future? I think the answer is, it's got to be profitable and right now it's not.

Right now we consider we had a pretty good year, and the expected returns are below cost of production. The only way we can make up that difference is with the increased value of the land and the ability to borrow against it. And that won't last forever.

Number two, reduced barriers of international trade. Right now we have many products coming in from China that are subsidized by their government. We can compete across this whole world as long as we haven't got to compete against the government. And as long as that happens, we lose. If you could do something about that?

The current NAP program, support that. Please keep that going. There's some problems with the crop insurance. For example, growers in Washington and Oregon have a whole different

deal than the growers in Utah. If you could make that even, that would be nice too.

Labor issues. We don't necessarily need citizens, but we need a migrant group of laborers that can come and go legally some way. And totally support what Mr. Wilson said on co-ops. With co-ops we can make things fly, and without them we really struggle. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Rolle. Back to the east side, please.

MR. BRIAN DAVIS: Mr. Secretary, I'd like to thank you and welcome you to Utah. My name is Brian Davis, manager of a local full-service retail cooperative out of Northern Utah. And I'd like to acknowledge what the gentleman said about our global --

My question, I'd like to address questions one and two and almost in reverse. I believe what you make decisions on globally, and your challenges are many, will affect what these young folks are going to have for the future. Cost of inputs for every one of these farmers and ranchers in this room in the last five short years are 70 percent plus increase on certain things. I don't care if it's tires, fuel, crop protection, crop nutrients. We've had three major manufacturers in the Pacific Northwest pull out of making a certain crop protection products and forces us to go globally and look for things.

As you know China's on a self-sustained drive unequalled right now, and they used to be a 38 percent importer of crop nutrients. They are now 14 percent exporter. I believe that's going to roll over into these gentlemen's expertise fields and will become a challenge in the future for them.

So what I'd have to say today is that costs are getting greater, we know where a bushel of grain stands today if we're looking at 67 percent increase on inputs cost. Your challenges are great in the future. These self-sustaining countries out there drives toward are going to be more competitive in the future, and I believe your challenges are great, and whatever you decide there is going to be for the youth, also the future to live with. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Davis. Let's go to the west side now.

MR. STEPHEN OSGUTHORPE: I'm Stephen Osguthorpe. I'm livestock, hay and grain farmer and live in Park City, Utah. I'm also vice president of the Utah Farm Bureau Federation. I'd like to continue with a couple of points that President Hogan was making and ran out of time.

One, development marketing and research. Investments should be made where agriculture producers will capture more of the value added product dollars. Invest in our land grant universities and extension service, the key to more than a century of American agriculture of success. The cornerstone to increase market opportunities is expansion of renewable fuels in the nation's energy policy, investments in the 2007 Farm Bill assisting in implementing feasible applications for ethanol and biodiesel.

Number two, new generation of farmers and ranchers. The average ages of farmers and ranchers continues to increase. We need to look at innovative solutions to pass the farm to the next generation. We need to provide educational opportunities, provide innovative finance programs, provide incentives recognizing agriculture's contribution to quality of life, provide tax breaks, interest buy-downs or write-offs, reduce land costs, etcetera.

I'd just like to thank Mr. Secretary for coming to Utah. And just a thought of my own is, you know, last time I looked everybody in this country eats. And we have a cheap food policy in this country. Whenever you help the farmers and ranchers in this country you're helping

everybody. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. The east side.

MR. DALLEN SMITH (sp): Hello. I'm Dallen Smith with USU Extension. Appreciate the opportunity to talk to you, Secretary. I'm going to talk about the question number four, achievement of conservation and environmental goals.

I have a concern about the public review of CNNPs (sp) for animal feeding operations. And what this means is when they write a comprehensive nutrient management plan they come out for public review for a 30-day period.

If we look at the history of the Forest Service and the BLM we know they had to come under public review and write environmental impact statements. And we know that has caused them to triple the time they spend in the office, and they haven't been able to put things on the ground.

And we know that our forests are not as healthy as they used to be. And that was why we had the Clean Water Act was to improve the forests, and now we have forests that are producing small spindly trees because we're not able to thin them and have larger trees.

To compare this, we have people trying to tell a neighbor how to take care of their waste who know nothing about it. And it will cost the farmer much more to do that, and we'd like to see policy which would keep these things private and have those that know the most about it. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you . To the west side, please.

MR. JERROLD RICHINS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I'm Jerrold Richins from Coalville, Utah. I'm a third-generation sheep producer, producer of seed stock for rambulet (sp) sheep. I have a concern with predators in our state. The Wildlife Service does an excellent job, but I feel they don't have enough funding to adequately do a good job for us. For instance their employees are probably paid \$13 an hour and probably eligible for Food Stamps.

A problem we have is in the '70s we used, tool we used was helicopters. \$90 an hour for a helicopter. Now we're looking at \$700 an hour. I'd appreciate all we could do to support Wildlife Services in the state. They do an excellent job and I appreciate them. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. Let's go to the east side now.

MR. DAN BELLKNAP (sp): Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thanks for coming to Utah. My name is Dan Bellknap, and I'm here with Utahans Against Hunger. We are a statewide anti-hunger organization. And as such we are very concerned about the Food Stamp program, which is of course administered by your department. Utah consistently ranks among the top five states in the country when it comes to food insecurity. Currently 14.6 percent of Utahans are food-insecure and 4.4 percent of those are food insecure and hungry.

The Food Stamp program in Utah serves 120,000 Utahans, more than 120,000 Utahans, and for many Food Stamps is the only way that families are able to consistently provide nutritionally adequate food for their children. And there are two significant points I'd like to make.

One is, that budget cuts must not come from the Food Stamp program. We've heard a lot

about the difficult choices the House and Senate Committee members have to make, and we recognize that. But believe that cuts to the Food Stamp program are absolutely the wrong way to make budget cuts happen.

Second, we strongly encourage the department to do everything it can to maintain the structure and preserve the structure of the Food Stamp program by resisting block grants and the super-waiver. The dangers of block grants and super waivers have been made very clear by the hurricane in the Gulf states. Had these policies currently been in place it would have harmed the ability of the victims of the hurricane to get Food Stamp benefits.

Again, we think these policy changes are the wrong direction for the program. We urge you to do everything you can to protect the Food Stamp program from both budget cuts, block grants and super-waivers.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Bellknap. Let's move to the west side now.

MR. DENTON JOHN (sp): Denton John from Portage, Utah. Farmer, rancher, right on the Utah-Idaho border. I didn't know anything about this meeting until yesterday. I appreciate being able to be here and to be able to speak.

I didn't get one of those things with the numbers of issues, so I've got four issues I'd like to talk about. Number one, back east we have a lot of people that think farmers and ranchers are getting rich from the government. They're not getting the information of where the \$60-plus billion a year for the Farm Bill goes. Farmers and ranchers themselves get between about \$12 billion and \$20 billion on a real good year. The rest of that goes for Food Stamps, goes for WIC program, for all these other issues.

I'd like to see the government get some information to the people back East. Let them know where the majority of that money for the Farm Bill is really going. The farmers should not be the ones taking the rap for that because we are slowly being put out of business.

Today I saw one of my grandfather's journals from 1860, and he said that for working a 12-hour day for a farmer they were paid \$2 or the equivalent of a bushel of wheat. Wheat today is a buck a bushel more than that. That's a real sad day when we are being paid a dollar a bushel more for wheat than they were 145 years ago.

I'd like to see some way the farmers are represented throughout the country. At the end of the day we have organizations that say they represent us, but at the end of the day they are insurance companies. I'll just pass on this other one of --

MODERATOR: Mr. John, your time is up. I appreciate that. Back to the east side, please.

MR. BILL ROSE: Mr. Secretary, my name is Bill Rose. I'm from Park Valley. I'm a cattle rancher. I'm the seventh generation to live on the ranch that I live on. I guess I'd like to address question number one and two, kind of just run them together.

I face the reality of being the next generation. I hope there can be many generations after me. It's been spoke of before and I don't know all the answers, and I know the Farm Bill won't necessarily deal with the estate tax, but I believe that is something if you can have any influence on that. There's been a lot of family farms and ranches sold to pay the estate tax.

Also I went to college for four years. I got to know a lot of kids that came from

agricultural backgrounds that came off ranches, came off farms, and I probably hold up on my two hands those hundreds of kids that were going back into production agriculture. But a lot of them were going into other parts of agriculture.

I went to Utah State University, a land grant college with research. Please support the research. That's where a lot of the kids that are coming off these places, that's where we can go back into agriculture and contribute that to agriculture as well.

Third thing is, I'd prefer to take my paycheck from the marketplace than from subsidy. Please expand our global markets, make us competitive. We don't want to have the government in our business, but when everybody else has got the government in their business we need your help to stay competitive. Please push forward our markets, open them up and so that we can remain competitive. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Rose. Back to the west.

MR. DENNIS RICHINS: Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming to Utah. My name is Dennis Richins. I'm the executive director of the Western Range Association. That's an organization that brings the sheepherders into the country for the ten western states. I'm not going to talk about any of the points today other than to let you know that if we didn't have the proper labor for our part of the open range shepherding we wouldn't have an organization.

Our problem is not getting the labor here; we are bringing people in from Peru, Chili, Bolivia, and Mexico. But our problem is getting them to stay once they get here. They are being pirated away by dairy farms in Idaho, some of the nurseries in Idaho, and it's an awful expense to a lot of the growers.

We were wondering if there's something that could be done through the Department of Agriculture that would put some more ties to these people so when they come on a contract to herd sheep they had to stay and herd sheep. We have tried with the ICE as they now call it. We don't get any response at all.

In fact one example, one grower from Wyoming had a herder walk off two different times; he hauled him down to the immigration office in Salt Lake and they threatened to put the grower in jail because that was kidnapping. So I don't know where we stand, but we need more teeth in the laws to make these immigrants that we're bringing in stay on the job they were recruited for.

As far as the ewe lamb program, I haven't talked to a grower -- and we have about 300 in our organization -- that really likes that program. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Richins. East side now.

MR. DON BURMATT (sp): My name is Don Burmatt from Lehi, Utah. I represent the seed industry. I'd like to address two points. One is the Conservation Reserve Program. I think it's a great program and hope that the 2007 Farm Bill continues with that program very strong.

I've heard some complaints about the program. I'm sure with every program there's benefits and negatives. In fact I heard a piece on NPR where they had discussed for the entire piece about how it was putting a lot of farm businesses at peril. But the original intention of the CRP was to take highly erodible ground out of production, ground that is supposedly uneconomical to farm.

Just quickly, I would hope at some point the government would assist the owners to move beyond only looking at farming and using that ground for some other kind of income source besides just getting a check from the government and thereby the CRP does a great job for improving our resources-- water and wildlife, etcetera.

Hopefully I'm not running on too long here, but then to just address this issue that Mr. Boyce had addressed with regards to the Forest Service and seeding after extreme fires, my understanding on doing the seeding is to arrest erosion. And what's happened in a lot of these places, the manager of the forests are not arresting erosion and just allowing Mother Nature to take over.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Don. Appreciate that. Back to the west side. And in 10 to 15 minutes we'll open up to general comments on the Farm Bill. So if you've got any comments you'd like in that direction, we'll be headed in that direction.

SHEEP FARMER: I welcome you here, Secretary. I'm a seed stock producer in the sheep business, and about 90 percent of our business is interstate movement of our livestock. And with the new regulations they're doing a lot of talking about now I'm very concerned. I've been on the certification, now I am a certified flock. And I've been on that program now for 8 years, and it's moving along quite well.

But I'm really concerned that the government comes out with some regulations on blood typing to move sheep interstate because if it was passed, the rules at the present time that we had to do all this blood typing to ship our sheep interstate, it would put us out of business in our operation because the financial investment of that is about \$20 a head. So that would be a cash outlay on our operation of about \$40,000, and there isn't that much in our business. So I'm very concerned about making regulations that would put a real handicap on the people that do interstate movement.

We also even move our sheep interstate for summer grazing. We move into the state of Idaho for the summertime, so we're really involved in interstate movement.

Another thing, on this national identification that's going to be moved ahead now, let's be sure that we don't run in with a lot of regulations that's going to really jeopardize our livestock industry. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Back to the east side.

MR. JIM ECKER (sp): Mr. Secretary, I appreciate you being here today so we can comment. My name is Jim Ecker. I'm a producer from out in Vernon, Utah. I guess my comment would pertain probably to question five, how can the farm program provide effective assistance in rural areas. I think one of our problems maybe today is the fact of the consolidation of our offices and talk of even more consolidation.

I think we need to realize that Utah, as many of these other western states, is bigger than many of the states in the Midwest -- our little communities are as close together as the counties are in some of those areas. And I think it makes it pretty difficult to get the type of assistance you need.

For instance if you're applying for some conservation program, the technical assistance, you have one person operating about four different counties, fairly large size, and it makes it hard to get them there on the ground to do the assistance needed in order to apply in a timely manner to participate in these programs.

So I would like to have that taken into consideration that when we're consolidating offices that states of large land area like Utah that's dispersed out widely doesn't take an extra hit on it because we don't have as many counties or maybe as many farmers in a particular area. But it does take quite a toll on the staff. I think our offices are small enough as they are and consolidated enough. I think that would help give us assistance in that direction.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Back to the west side.

MR. GREG RADMAIL: Mr. Secretary, my name is Greg Radmail. I'm the executive director for the Utah Dairymen's Association. I think you'd probably agree that most all these problems would be solved by money or time. We think there's plenty of money in the food chain market. We'd support the concept of the wheat. I think in the last 15 years the GAO through some of their studies have showed that the dairymen's portion of the retail dollar has gone from about 50 percent down in some cases to 19 or 20 percent.

So that's probably the biggest part of our problem.

I'd like to touch on two and four just briefly. Mr. Secretary, we'd like you to ensure the total enforcement of the dairy checkoff dollars for imported dairy products that are coming into this country. Right now we've got an uneven playing field in that area. It's something we'd like you to take a look at.

As we are aware, we do work in a world market, and the other countries that are giving conservation money to their producers in lieu of direct payments-- we think we here in the United States we'd like to have credits for the good things that are done in water and air quality on farms throughout the country and a way for that to be expressed in dollars rewards for people doing a good job. We've been bombarded by those that would like to penalize agriculture. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. LANE PARKER: Yes, Mr. Secretary. My name is Lane Parker. I'm a third generation rancher, cattleman, plus we run a livestock auction yard so I'm dealing with the small farmers every day of the week.

And what I guess I'd like to address is more questions one and two. And when it said in question number one in the comments there, unintended consequences, any time we have a forum like this and we're building up to the Farm Bill I see certain things in the Farm Bill that I may like to see. But again I don't know the unintended consequences of those, the mandatory COOL. I read some articles that make me think that needs to be funded in the Farm Bill. But then I worry about what else is out there that I don't see in the big picture.

And the national ID will definitely affect me as an operator in how that becomes implemented. And many of the local operators around me are becoming worried about that as it becomes somewhat informed that it may become mandatory very shortly; and how are they going to comply with it, how will I as an auctioneer operator be able to comply with that?

But I've got a son who wants to stay on the ranch and keep running cattle. He's got three little boys who love to be out there. We want to make that happen, but the way things are developing unless cattle prices stay where they are we're not going to be able to survive doing this. And I don't think they're going to stay that way on a world market, a global market, how we can compete with other countries.

But I know the Farm Bill, there's a lot of avenues in there. I'm afraid of the unintended consequences. Some of those mandatory programs look right now like they could be effective for us, but I really worry about what the long term of that is. But if we can stay on the family farm, we just got to -- if we can get the market to support us that's the way I'd like to see it happen. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Okay, thank you. Nobody standing at the mikes, and we do have a little bit of time if you'd still like to make some comments in general on the Farm Bill. Is there anyone that would like to make further comment? Commissioner?

MR. RONDEL PERKINS: Sir, I'd like to make one more comment. Rondel Perkins. I'm a cattleman. It's on this country of origin labeling. The American National Cattlemen's has made you believe it's going to cost a tremendous amount of money to label where this meat's coming from. The U.S. don't need to label the meat. We don't need to label our meat. It's the meat that's coming in that needs to be labeled. And if they mix that meat with our meat, then it's got to be labeled as not from the United States.

So the cost would be very minimal to us. And I think the country of origin labeling needs to be put in. People need to know where their meat comes from. I'm an organic grower. Hey, it's the best thing that ever happened to me, this BSE and the people that don't want -- they say these people don't care, this meat's safe, these people don't care where it comes from. Oh, yeah, they do, because I can tell you when my calf was born, where it was born and where its mother was. And the people enjoy that and they want to know it.

So I think country of origin labeling ought to be implemented in the Farm Bill.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Mr. Secretary, let me likewise thank you for being here. We appreciate you taking the opportunity. You can hear today you've had a lot of our producers here address you, good producers, and a wide variety, and they're the leaders in their industry and their sector of agriculture. And I think if there's one thing they've echoed is of course is they'd like to make their living through the market.

And the other thing I think they have emphasized, there's some opportunities here with the energy, agriculture to energy issue. I think we're fully supportive of expanding that arena and hoping that can be one of those opportunities to improve the market for agriculture products.

The level playing field they have mentioned, everyone's mentioned that. It's so important in these trade negotiations that we have that level playing field and that we can compete with the world market that's developing.

The other thing I want to let you know is our department works closely with many of your departments as well. We work closely with APHIS, we work closely with NRCS and FSA and all the others, and we have a good working relationship. In fact we do a lot of partnership programs in Utah, and we have one called the Utah Conservation Partnership. Forest Service and NRCS are major players in that, our Department of Natural Resources.

What we're trying to do is arrange land rehabilitation. If you take our livestock industry in this state, they're dependent upon the public lands. Now in Utah we're 70 percent public lands -- Forest Service and BLMs, state lands, SITLA (sp), school crosslands. And so that interface is absolutely essential.

And we are developing a program called Watershed Improvement Program where we're going in improving the watersheds. And in those watersheds is a mix of public and private lands. And we're using this partnership to accomplish that. Now the attitude is great, but of course the resources, we need more assistance on a federal basis to improve those watersheds on the public lands.

We also have a real problem getting through some of the environmental requirements, the red tape. So if there's a possibility of improving those processes so we can get on the ground faster, eliminate the invasive species, improve the habitat, improve the watershed, have all those multiple benefits of water quantity, water quality, wildlife and grazing for livestock.

We just appreciate you being here. It's just so amazing to us that you'd come to Utah and we appreciate your attention and your listening and we just thank you very much for being with us. Thanks again.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

[Applause.]

Looks like one or two more comments. Please state your name.

MR. GARY ROSE: Mr. Secretary, my name is Gary Rose. I sit here today as a member -- I have a son and a grandson here and I'm a fifth-generation rancher. I'm past president of the Utah Cattlemen. I want to tell you, sitting here watching your expressions today you're a George W. Bush II. You hold your mouth the same, and I hope that you're as honest as he is because he is a favorite of mine, having met him a long time ago in Texas. I've always appreciated him.

I want to echo many of the thoughts that were here today. I hate to say what I'm going to say because I get kidded about getting older, but I'm part of the old bunch now. You know? I have 12 great-grandchildren and 20 grandchildren and so that makes me real old.

But I want you to know that in order for the cattle industry to survive in the United States in the world market -- and I've sat in many places on a national level and observed this over the last 25 or 30 years -- that we cannot, and I reiterate that, we cannot compete with Brazils and Australias and these places on the present basis because it just isn't there.

We have to be protected in some way, some form. With the programs that you have in place now are a great help, but there is no way until all the countries take their support off-- and you know the foreign, over in Europe that's not going to happen overnight. And the other places we can't even get in. I thank you for being here.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate that. One final comment?

MR. DENTON JOHN: Yes. Denton John. Seems like we got a little time left here, but I have two concerns additionally. Number one, I have a 30-year-old son that I'm trying to turn the place over to, and there are so many roadblocks in the way that it's just killing us. We've looked, we've spent thousands of dollars trying to figure out how to do it. With attorneys and everything else. And we have not got a satisfactory answer on how to do it.

I'd like to see something change on that.

And then I would like to speak in opposition to CAFTA, to NAFTA. I think those have

hurt us. Secretary, appreciate all you do. But there was a statement made awhile back that the price of beef was getting too high. I think that goes right back to you.

And I didn't hear anybody at all in the grocery store complaining about high prices of beef. We've had the price of diesel and fuel go up so high that I don't know how farmers are going to survive with that. So I would like to, I have a masters degree in economics. And I disagree with some of the macro-economic ideas that have been pushed. We're not playing on a level playing field with Canada and Central America and South America. They are treated way better by their government than we are.

MODERATOR: If there's no further comment, we'd like to go ahead and let the Secretary give us some closing remarks.

SEC. JOHANNIS: Let me wrap up the forum with a couple of thoughts. First and probably most importantly, thank you so very much for a very thoughtful, I think well-prepared, diverse forum. This forum I think has been really one of the better ones we have done just in terms of fleshing out a lot of testimony on a lot of different issues. And folks in Utah have strong opinions, and that was evident today. It was excellent, just an excellent forum.

So I appreciate it, and a great turnout. Just an unbelievable turnout.

Some issues were raised in the forum that maybe I can offer a thought or two about, don't want to keep you a lot longer today. But I'm just going to tick down through some things that you offered and maybe raised a question or two about that I think I can be helpful with in terms of offering some insight in terms of current legislation or some things we are anticipating.

First place I would start, there was quite a bit of testimony today about energy independence in one form or fashion. And we've heard a lot about this as we have done these forums across the country. I have said over and over again that good farm policy is not just a farm bill. Good farm policy is good tax policy, good farm policy is good trade policy, good farm policy is good energy policy.

We too often tend to think about the future of agriculture in terms of what the Farm Bill - and it's important; don't get me wrong-- but it is a piece of a very, very complicated puzzle.

Now when President Bush came to office four and a half years ago, he campaigned on (audio break) --